

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for playing a wagering game on a gaming terminal, the gaming terminal being one of a plurality of gaming terminals, the plurality of gaming terminals being linked to a multi-terminal prize pool, the method comprising:

conducting a wagering game having a randomly selected outcome;

5 awarding a player a payout amount in response to the randomly selected outcome being one of a plurality of winning outcomes; and

increasing the amount of the multi-terminal prize pool in response to the randomly selected outcome being a multi-terminal prize-pool increasing outcome.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the randomly selected outcome
10 comprises at least one symbol.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the at least one symbol is a card from a deck of playing cards.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the wagering game is a slot machine and the at least one symbol is a reel symbol.

15 5. The method of claim 1, further including receiving player-identification information, the awarding step comprising crediting an amount to a player account indicated in the player-identification information.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying the payout amount associated with each of the plurality of winning outcomes.

20 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying the amount the multi-terminal prize pool is increased in response to the randomly selected outcome being the multi-terminal prize-pool increase outcome.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the conducting, awarding, and increasing steps are performed by a controller connected to each of the plurality of
25 gaming terminals.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising inputting a wager amount on the wagering game by the player, and, wherein, in response to the randomly selected outcome being the multi-terminal prize-pool increasing outcome, the multi-terminal prize pool is increased by the wager amount.

30 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising inputting a wager amount on the wagering game by the player, and, wherein, in response to the randomly

selected outcome being the multi-terminal prize-pool increasing outcome, the multi-terminal prize pool is increased by an amount greater than the wager amount.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising awarding the multi-terminal prize pool in response to the randomly selected outcome being a multi-terminal prize-pool award outcome.

12. The method claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of gaming terminals includes a terminal-level prize pool and further comprising increasing the terminal-level prize pool at one of said plurality of gaming terminals in response to the randomly selected outcome being a terminal-level prize pool at said one of said plurality of gaming terminals.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising awarding the terminal-level prize pool at said one of said plurality of gaming terminals in response to the randomly selected outcome being a terminal-level prize pool award outcome.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the terminal-level prize pool is awarded only for a limited amount of time.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein the terminal-level prize pool is awarded only for a limited number of gaming sessions.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the multi-terminal prize pool is a restricted-access wagering game.

17. A gaming system, comprising:

a controller; and

a plurality of gaming terminals coupled to the controller, each of the plurality of gaming terminals having a wagering game having a plurality of symbols that indicate a randomly selected outcome of the wagering game, and a prize pool;

in response to one of the randomly selected outcomes at one of the plurality of gaming terminals being one of a plurality of winning outcomes, the one of the plurality of gaming terminals awarding the player a payout amount, and, in response to the randomly selected outcome at one of the plurality of gaming terminals being a prize-pool increase outcome, the one of the plurality of gaming terminals increasing the amount of the prize pool.

18. The gaming system of claim 17, further comprising a plurality of multi-terminal prize pools, the multi-terminal prize pools including a bank-level prize pool and a wide-area network prize pool.

19. The gaming system of claim 18, wherein, in response to the randomly selected outcome being the prize-pool increase outcome, the controller increases the amount of at least one of the plurality of multi-terminal prize pools.

20. The gaming system of claim 17, wherein the prize pool is a terminal-level prize pool.

21. The gaming system of claim 17, wherein the basic game comprises the player wagering a wagering amount on the basic game, and in response to the randomly selected outcome being the prize-pool increase outcome, the prize pool is increased by a percentage of the wager amount.

22. The gaming system of claim 17, wherein the basic game comprises the player wagering a wagering amount on the basic game, and in response to the randomly selected outcome being the prize-pool increase outcome, the prize pool is increased by an amount greater than the wager amount.

23. The gaming system of claim 17, wherein, the prize-pool increase outcome is one of the plurality of winning outcomes.

24. The gaming system of claim 17, wherein the prize pool is awarded when the randomly selected outcome is a predetermined one of the plurality of winning outcomes.

25. The gaming system of claim 17, wherein the randomly selected outcome comprises at least one symbol and the amount the prize pool is increased depends on which of the at least one symbols is achieved.

26. The gaming system of claim 17, wherein the amount the prize pool is increased is dependent upon an amount wagered in the wagering game.

27. A gaming system, comprising:

a plurality of gaming terminals for playing a wagering game having a prize pool, in response to receiving wager inputs from players, each of the plurality of gaming terminals capable of achieving a plurality of outcomes, said plurality of outcomes including a plurality of winning outcomes that have a corresponding payout

amount, a plurality of prize-pool winning outcomes, and a plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes; and

a controller coupled to each of the plurality of gaming terminals and receiving wager-input signals from the plurality of gaming terminals, in response to receiving the wager-input signal from one of the plurality of gaming terminals, the controller randomly choosing between the plurality of outcomes, in response to the controller randomly selecting one of the plurality of winning outcomes, the controller awarding the player the corresponding payout amount, in response to the controller randomly selecting one of the plurality of prize-pool winning outcomes, the controller awarding the amount of the prize pool, and in response to the controller randomly selecting one of the plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes, the controller increasing the prize pool.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein, each of the plurality of prize pool increasing outcomes result in the prize pool being increased by a different amount.

29. A method of conducting a basic wagering game at one of a plurality of gaming terminals, the wagering game having a prize pool, the method comprising: receiving a wager input for each gaming session of the wagering game; awarding a player a payout amount when one of a plurality of winning outcomes is achieved; and

crediting a portion of the wager input to the prize pool when a prize-pool increase outcome is achieved.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the portion of the wager input is less than the wager input.

31. The method of claim 29, wherein the apportioning the portion of the wager input creates an increased-value prize pool, the increased-value prize pool capable of being awarded for only a limited amount of time.

32. The method of claim 29, wherein the apportioning the portion of the wager input creates an increased-value prize pool, the increased-value prize pool capable of being awarded for only a limited number of gaming sessions.

33. The method of claim 29, further comprising receiving player identification information, wherein the apportioning the portion of the wager input

creates an increased-value prize pool, the increased-value prize pool capable of being awarded only to a player associated with the player identification information.

34. The method of claim 29, wherein the prize pool is a restricted-access wagering game.

5 35. The method of claim 29, wherein the portion of the wager input equals the wager input.

36. The method of claim 35, further comprising adding an additional value beyond the wager input to the prize pool.

37. The method of claim 29, further comprising forfeiting the opportunity
10 to achieve the prize pool in the wagering game.

38. A method for playing a wagering game on a gaming terminal, the gaming terminal being one of a plurality of gaming terminals, the plurality of gaming terminals having a multi-terminal prize pool, the method comprising:

conducting the wagering game on one of the plurality of gaming terminals, the
15 wagering game having a randomly selected outcome;

increasing the amount of the multi-terminal prize pool in response to the randomly selected outcome being one of a plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes; and

awarding the amount of the prize pool in response to the randomly selected
20 outcome being a multi-terminal prize-pool awarding outcome.

39. A gaming terminal comprising:

a wagering game having a plurality of symbols that indicate a randomly selected outcome of the wagering game; and

a prize pool;

25 wherein, in response to the randomly selected outcome being one of a plurality of prize-pool increase outcomes, the gaming terminal increases the amount of the prize pool.

40. The gaming terminal of claim 39, wherein each of the plurality of prize-pool increase outcomes increases the prize pool by a different amount.

30 41. A gaming terminal comprising:

a wagering game having a plurality of symbols that indicate a randomly selected outcome of the wagering game; and

a plurality of prize pools;

wherein, in response to the randomly selected outcome being one of a plurality of prize-pool increase outcomes, the gaming terminal increases the amount of one of the plurality of prize pools.

5 42. The terminal of claim 41, wherein the plurality of prize-pool increase outcomes increase different ones of the plurality of prize pools and by differing amounts.

43. A gaming system comprising:

a controller; and

10 a plurality of gaming terminals coupled to the controller, each of the plurality of gaming terminals having a wagering game with a randomly selected outcome, and being linked to a plurality of prize pools;

wherein in response to the randomly selected outcome at any of said plurality of gaming terminals being one of a plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes, the controller increasing one of the plurality of prize pools, and, in response to the
15 randomly selected outcome being one of a plurality of prize-pool award outcomes, the controller awarding a player one of the plurality of prize pools.

44. The gaming system of claim 43, wherein each of the plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes includes at least one prize-pool triggering symbol.

20 45. The gaming system of claim 43, wherein each of the plurality of prize-pool award outcomes includes a plurality of symbols, and at least one of the symbols is a "break the bank" symbol.

46. The gaming system of claim 43, wherein the which of the plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes is the randomly selected outcome is determined
25 randomly during a bonus game.

47. The gaming system of claim 43, wherein the which of the plurality of prize-pool award outcomes is the randomly selected outcome is determined randomly during a bonus game.

48. A gaming system comprising:

30 a controller; and

a plurality of gaming terminals coupled to the controller, each of the plurality of gaming terminals having a wagering game with a randomly selected outcome, and being linked to a prize pool;

wherein in response to the randomly selected outcome at any of said plurality of gaming terminals being one of a plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes, the controller increasing the prize pool, each of the plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes causing the prize pool to be increased by a different amount, and, in response to the randomly selected outcome being the prize-pool award outcome, the controller awarding a player the prize pool.

49. The gaming system of claim 48, wherein each of the plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes comprises at least one prize-pool triggering symbol.

50. The gaming system of claim 48, wherein the amount that the prize pool is increased is unknown to the player.

51. The gaming system of claim 50, wherein the amount that the prize pool is increased is visually illustrated on a video screen.

52. A gaming system comprising:

a controller; and

a plurality of gaming terminals coupled to the controller, each of the plurality of gaming terminals having a wagering game with a randomly selected outcome, and being linked to a plurality of prize pools;

wherein in response to the randomly selected outcome at any of said plurality of gaming terminals being one of a plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes, the controller increasing one of the plurality of prize pools, and, in response to the randomly selected outcome being one of the plurality of prize-pool award outcomes, the controller awarding a player one of the plurality of prize pools, such that an amount is awarded to the player only when the randomly selected outcome is one of the plurality of prize-pool awarding outcomes.

53. The gaming system of claim 52, wherein each of the plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes includes at least one symbol, the at least one symbol being a prize-pool triggering symbol.

54. The gaming system of claim 52, wherein each of the plurality of prize-pool award outcomes includes a plurality of symbols, and at least one of the symbols is a “break the bank” symbol.

5 55. The gaming system of claim 52, wherein the which of the plurality of prize-pool increasing outcomes is the randomly selected outcome is determined randomly during a bonus game.